

Before The  
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
Washington, D.C. 20554

In the Matter of

Implementing A Broadband Interoperable  
Public Safety Network in The 700MHz Band

PS Docket 06-229

Service Rules for the 698-746, 747-762, and  
777-792 Bands

WT Docket 06-150

COMMENTS OF THE 700MHz REGIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE,  
REGION 6,  
(Northern California),

IN RESPONSE TO THE SECOND FURTHER NOTICE OF PROPOSED  
RULE MAKING

The Regional Planning Committee 6 (RPC6) respectfully submits the following comments relative to the Second Further Notice of Proposed Rule Making (FNPRM), released May 14, 2008:

RPC6 wishes to extend our gratitude to the Commission for affording the public the opportunity to offer comments as it weighs the complexity and breadth of the best use of the 700MHz D Block spectrum.

We also wish to commend the Commission for publishing a very detailed, 87 point questionnaire in order to elicit specific comments. However, we prefer to offer general comments and ask that the Commission use its discretion in applying them to the appropriate areas pertinent to the 700MHz D Block as you compile a considerable amount of data from across the nation.

The essential positions that RPC6 asserts include the fundamental urgency for this Country to develop a national broadband network, primarily for the use by public safety agencies and to recognize the very rare opportunity afforded to all public safety agencies by The Congress when it allocated this resource with the express objective of achieving radio interoperability at the national level. We urge you not to reduce this urgency to just another band of spectrum allocated to public safety with no clearly defined standards, which the licensees could use to build new systems but in doing so may in fact perpetuate the very problem that The Congress is attempting solve. The Commission has over time allocated specific bands within VHF, UHF,

800MHz and now 700MHz for public safety to use, largely without mandating radio interoperability. As we all know disparate spectrum is one of the fundamental contributing factors that has caused the nation to experience to varying degrees a lack of radio interoperability. Therefore we urge the Commission not to abandon its goal of creating a national broadband network and not to allow the alternative of a fractured 700MHz network such as one that would surely be realized if individual regions or local governments have the option of building their own respective systems with this spectrum.

Having “repacked” the narrowband (voice) spectrum allocated by the Commission to public safety in our own efforts to maximize the efficiency of this 10MHz block, we are confident that this block is adequate in quantity for voice applications within Region 6, allowing for a contiguous block to be used for broadband data. Interoperability should be a national priority and should not be limited to those agencies that operate within a local area already. Natural and man-made disasters have occurred everywhere throughout our great nation and will occur repeatedly, warranting the deployment of various resources to those areas affected, and thus warranting a ubiquitous nationwide broadband network. It is unlikely that regional entities can effectively design, procure, and implement compatible broadband systems, potentially fifty-five or more of these systems, across the nation, and ensure radio interoperability. This is particularly evident in light of the fact that some regions have been fortunate in obtaining grant funds to build their voice systems while other regions have not. We expect that if the Commission allows each region to independently build systems with the D Block spectrum then we also anticipate a further realization of disparity across the nation, further exacerbating the radio interoperability challenge as a nation.

We also understand the immense challenges for any bidder for the 700Mhz D Block in meeting the myriad demands by public safety for a robust network that guarantees priority access to public safety agencies on an as-needed basis and the equally immense costs associated with building such a national network, obviously dissuading interested bidders. Therefore we urge the Commission to consider easing some of the parameters that the PSST has established for the bidders fulfill. One specific parameter that we believe invites relaxation and altering the requirement to provide coverage to 99% of the nation within 10 years. A more realistic parameter would be 95% of the United States population within all Urban Areas as defined by the federal Department of Homeland Security, while allowing the successful bidder to expand that coverage upon execution of Memorandum Of Understandings with any remaining governmental agencies. This would be one measure that would certainly reduce the cost of a national network considerably yet

support the objective of realizing radio interoperability at a national level. Since 700MHz is not generally not well suited for rural areas, those areas are not likely to be served by a UHF system in favor of VHF.

We urge the Commission to re-bid the auction for the 700MHz D Block, retain the fundamental objectives outlined in the previous auction excepting a relaxation of the mandated technical requirements, if necessary through a negotiation process with the highest rated bidder of a Request For Proposal process. Further, we urge the Commission to reduce or remove the minimum bid requirement in recognition of the overwhelming success of the auction of the other blocks within 700MHz, the prerequisite investiture required of the D Block bidder, and the value to public safety of the first-ever national public safety radio network.

We suggest that the Commission ask itself how will this nation respond to a Katrina-like event in the future absent a national, ubiquitous and interoperable network.

This response represents the majority of the RPC6 representatives, including those from Sacramento, Alameda, and Marin Counties, the Cities of Oakland and San Jose, and others who chose to articulate their opinion on the subject, noting the exception of the City of San Francisco, which has filed its own comments.

Respectfully,

Randall Hagar, Chair  
Region 6, 700MHz RPC

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